

An INTERVIEW With
Genmaj Otto REKER



THE 20 JUL 44 PLOT

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DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
HISTORICAL DIVISION
SPECIAL STAFF, UNITED STATES ARMY
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

12 July 1949

Note to: ETHW 63

By: Kenneth W. Hochler
Major, Infantry (Res)

No record in German was made at the time of this oral interview, inasmuch as Lt. Merriam took notes in English on the remarks of General Nemer as they were translated by the interpreter. Lt. Merriam then used his English notes as the basis for this report which he prepared after the completion of the oral interview.

This was the only oral or written interview which Lt. Merriam had concerning matters other than the Ardennes Offensive. From previous readings on the 20 July 1944 plot, Lt. Merriam was particularly interested in collecting details on this affair, with the possible hope that he might later publish a book or magazine article devoted to the German story behind this plot.

(The first paragraph of the above is based on a general knowledge of the way in which Lt. Merriam operated; the second paragraph is based on what Lt. Merriam told me personally.)

EXHIBIT 68 - ()

Title : The 20 July 44 List
Source : Gen. (then Capt) Werner, Otto
Position : Capt, Third Regt, "Brandenburg"
Date : 15 Aug 45
Place : PW Camp # 24, Wirt US Army
Interviewer : 1st Lt Robert W. Merrick
Interpreter : 2/S Walter Pucker, 17th Regt

2021 EDITION

1970-1971

This situation is one of a general conflict between the
newly formed 'Maha' and the old 'Mysore' and 'Mysore'
and 'Mysore' which has already taken place, and as far as the
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1. After five years of fighting with the Div "Großdeutschland," in France, the Balkans, and Russia, I was brought back to Berlin for a rest, and was given command of the Honor Battalion guarding the Government headquarters. Prior to this command, I had been acting commander of a panzer grenadier regiment in the Div "Großdeutschland." This task (which) I, besides having the mission of guarding the Government, also represented the Army in Berlin.

2. Then I was informed of the situation, my present job required me to go on guard business on Unter den Linden in Berlin (between the Reichs- and the Kurfürstendamm), a place that became the goal against the 7th regiment bus had been stopped in that time. I particularly further stated that this place had never been disclosed, and would be disclosed, because it was to be known to the public, in order to determine the reason by letting it be known that the attempt had been made to assassinate the President. I was established in the purpose of this, and I was told, according to the order of the General, that that time, we had over a million foreign workers in Berlin, and that all our revolution did start, 500,000 people would be in very great numbers.

3. An order was given for the defense of the Berlin area, and of the mobilization of all the Army preparing, most of which, and the order of the defense and Army in Berlin. A special task for the extermination of Hitler, and the execution of the command of a planned revolution, upon which, and upon my personal responsibility, I immediately began to mobilizing and preparing. "Crisis" was the code name for the internal revolution.

4. About 1500 on 20 Jul 44, I received a telephone call giving the code word "Gneisenau." This call came from the Office of the Military Commander in Berlin, Gen von Kesse; I was ordered to report to him immediately. I arrived at the Commander's office and found a number of general officers and other high personnel already assembled there. When I entered the room, I noticed that the G-2 (S-2 not further identified) appeared very pale and that apparently a man by the name of Maj von Hagedorn had replaced him. The atmosphere was very tense. I was told that the Fuehrer had died by accident, that a revolution had broken out, that the executive power had passed to the Army, and that I was to block off certain sections of the Government compound so that no one could get in or out.

5. This statement, combined with the language of the telephone call and the warning by predecessor had given me, but I can recall to all accuracy, during General Gneisenau's talk with me, the following:

- (1) That the Fuehrer was dead.
- (2) That in the revolution, I am now responsible to the Army Headquarters Command.
- (3) That the revolution was planned by the Army.
- (4) That the revolution was planned by the Army Headquarters Command.
- (5) That the Army Headquarters Command is in control of the Army.

6. I received no satisfactory answer to these questions.

However, I returned to my Battalion and immediately called a conference of officers at which I ordered a ring placed around the Government buildings, and gave instructions that no one was to accept any orders unless they were given by me personally. The entire situation looked suspicious to me, but I did not know what was going on.

7. Although the ring was placed around the Government buildings, it was not complete because the subway had not been cut off, nor had communications been cut. The Army Headquarters had been told that an Oberstlt Weller would be down to assist me in these technical matters. When this officer arrived, he immediately said that I need not be afraid of him, that he was not a spy. This made me extremely suspicious because I could not understand why he would think I would regard him as a spy unless something unusual was going on.

8. After the meeting of my officers, one of my lieutenants, named Haven, called me aside and said that he wished to report that he had seen General von Brauchitsch in the streets. He expressed concern over my regard at this as Von Brauchitsch had been retired for some time and was not often seen in Berlin. The Lieutenant suggested that he contact a man for whom he worked prior to his entrance into the Army. He said this man was not one of the "Master race" and might be able to give some suggestions on the situation. I sent him to see this former employer of his.

9. After we formed the ring around the Government buildings, I was ordered to watch particularly the section near the railroad station, which was where the security police were located. A short time later, as I was moving through the streets, I spotted an Ober Schaefer, whom I

superior, I finally decided that I should go to see him despite the fact that Von Hassel had refused my request.

13. I went to Goebbels' office and we immediately ushered in to see him. Before I had gone in, I had told a group of my men I had brought with me that if I were not back in 20 minutes they should come up to get me... I did this because I did not fully trust Goebbels and wanted to make sure that he was not also involved.

14. I was immediately admitted to Gobbel's office and the first question that he asked me was, "Are you a Nazi officer?" I told him that I had taken my oath to the Fuehrer and that I intended to keep it even if he were dead. Gobbel then said, "What do you know about the situation?" I told him what I had previously known, and he said that this could not be true because he had talked to the Fuehrer over the telephone. I then asked Gobbel if he were a Hitler follower; he replied, "I am not, but I am the kind of person that the world needs at this time. I do what I had done and I told him as much as I thought he was entitled to tell; I was still not absolutely sure in those moments who he was. I told him that I intended to talk with the Fuehrer to ascertain, for myself then, if he still lived. He said this could be arranged and in three minutes I was talking with the Fuehrer. He said to me, "We have the original maps of the Eastern Front. Only, you will have to be involved and we will clandestinely follow the route. You are placed in a difficult position. You are responsible to use your power. You are under my orders until Hitler arrives to take over the Regierung himself. Do you understand me?"

At the end of the conversation, Goering, who was present, asked me what the Fuehrer had said and I related the conversation in substance. I also told Goering that I had immediately confirmed the actual situation to the Armies (Ed: SS) moving toward Berlin and that I would inform General von Kluge of the situation and do everything I could to prevent unnecessary bloodshed.

15. By this time, a tank formation had been alerted and was assembling in the Berliner Platz. Although this group thought that I was with the revolution, I was able to get in touch with them just in time to prevent any bloodshed. I then assumed command of the tanks and used them to help prevent any shots being fired. Six officers to whom I spoke believed that Adolf Hitler was alive and that "I" was what to do. I called on the replacement Army to send additional tanks. Previously, Goering had called the tanks prior to calling the SS, but I told him that I should be the one to call out Hitler. That it was my responsibility to call the SS to fight Hitler.

16. At this time, there was a report of some shooting and I was ordered to block the sector where the brains of the plot were supposed to be. (Admiral) the new government had placed troops from various units around this area, I was sent to call out the SS to effect their withdrawal. When I went to the area of the shooting which followed reported by Goering, I saw Gen. Haase (Ed: General Gen. Nick Haase) of the Luftwaffe Artillery. I said to him, "What are you doing down there?" He said "I am a member of the SS." What are you doing down there? He answered, "Chief of the Guards" (Ed: probably General Dr. Erhard)

Kaltenbrunner, Chief of Security Police and Security Service), also came and shortly thereafter Hitler arrived; the crisis had passed.

17. I will now relate to you the happenings at the Hitler-Bunker, which I have heard only from people who were there. Count von Stauffenberg, who had placed the bomb in Hitler's Headquarters, which was in Rastenburg at that time, believed that Hitler was dead because he had successfully placed the bomb, heard the explosion, and gotten away. Von Stauffenberg returned to Berlin by airplane, but, typical of the mentality of the plotters, had neglected to arrange for a car to meet him at the airport. As a result, he had to wait an hour for transportation into town.

18. Von Stauffenberg went to the Hitler-Bunker, where, with Colonel Hooyer and others, he tried to play at revolution. At this time, Gen. Tresz tried to arrest Stauffenberg, but instead was arrested himself by the Military Police. (RE: As this officer can be identified as Count Friedrich Tresz, Refugee German's account of his action that follows is confirming. In Gen. Tresz was executed 14 May 1945 for participation in the plot, it can only be assumed that either he was executed for a crime of which he was innocent or, seeing that the plot was doomed to failure, decided to try to save himself by turning on his fellow conspirators.) At this point, Tresz requested Von Brauchitsch to come to the Bunker. Von Brauchitsch had been asked to participate in the "Bach", but he was not interested and so returned to his home. The Gow order of "Glocke 100", Gen. von Kortzfleisch, was also invited to participate, and was arrested when he refused to take part.

19. The entire thing was very naive. Telephones were important and neither the populace nor the Army was against Hitler. If the plan had been successful, Hitler and the Nazis would have been in great trouble. And if they did the same they would be suffered.

Mr. De Lapp will be the best man to get the facts from Count De Salis.

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AUTH: CG Third US Army
DATE: 30 August 1945
TITLE: ~~SECRET~~

HEADQUARTERS
THIRD UNITED STATES ARMY
Interrogation Center (Provisional)

INTERROGATION REPORT No 24

Source: REINER, Otto, General Major, AIC 1372, 30 August 1945

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(Based on USCEC Interrogation Brief No 3,
dated 13 July 1945)

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S E C R E T

INTERROGATION REPORT No 34

I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ARDENNES Offensive

This report was prepared in answer to USFET Interrogation Brief No 3, dated 13 July 1945.

Preamble. Generalmajor Otto Ernst REINER, source for the answers to this questionnaire, is the Major REINER, formerly in command of the "Nachbataillon" in BERLIN, who was instrumental in checking the military follow-through of the 20 July 1944 plot against HITLER's life. He assumed command of the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade (Brigade REINER) shortly before the ARDENNES offensive.

The Fuehrer Begleit Brigade left RASTENBURG, Ost-preussen, about 25 November for DARM (Rifel) (GSGS 4346/R 51/L 3577) and was first committed in the ST VITH area (GSGS 4042/6/P 88), whence it advanced towards LAROCHE (GSGS 4042/6/P 47). On 27 December Brigade REINER was committed west of BASTOGNE (GSGS 4042/6/P 55) in order to secure German positions in this sector.

Brigade REINER was composed of the following elements at the start of the ARDENNES offensive:

Flak Abteilung
Grenadier Bataillon 1 (SP)
Grenadier Bataillon 2 (Plot)
Grenadier Bataillon zbv 928 (later Grenadier Bataillon 3)
Artillerie Abteilung
Panzer Abteilung
Heeres Sturmgeschuetz Abteilung 200
Panzer Regiments Stab
Nachrichten Abteilung
Feld Ersatz Abteilung

Answers to the Questionnaire.

1. What security measures were adopted by German unit commanders between the time they received initial orders concerning the ARDENNES offensive and 16 December 1944?

a. Radio security. From the arrival of the Fuehrer Begleit Brigade in the west in early December 1944 until the commitment of the brigade on 18 December 1944, the unit kept a strict radio silence. There were no exercises with radio-communication sets. Even the use of private radio sets at lowest level was prohibited.

b. False radio traffic. Although the Brigade REINER used no false radio traffic, some was employed by higher echelons.

c. Security of troop movements to avoid identification by aircraft. Before and during the offensive all troop movements were executed by night or in unfavorable flying weather.

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S E C R E T

INTERROGATION REPORT No 34

I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ARDENNES Offensive
(Continued)

In clear weather only single vehicles were permitted to travel on roads. An order was issued that convoys which had hauled supplies to the front during the night should travel during daylight in an eastward direction in order to deceive the enemy by failing a withdrawal of troops from the front lines. Vehicles, particularly tracked armored vehicles, were parked in woods outside of towns. AA defenses were passive, and only in case of an air attack on military targets were they to open fire.

Special care was taken to enforce camouflage discipline in towns. Traces of units were removed, and the assembly or marching of large bodies of men was prohibited. The use of road-markers and sign-posts by units in villages or on roads was prohibited; unit markers were not displayed on billets. Only during actual road marches could markers be posted, showing the names of commanding officers as unit identification. Road control by military police was very strict, and roads could be used by unit convoys only in accordance with a schedule. All vehicle bumper markings were painted over. During the transport of tanks on railway flatcars, camouflage had to conceal the vehicles in such a way that they could not be recognized from the air as tanks.

Supply depots of all kinds were dispersed very skillfully in forests, especially pine woods. Roads leading to and from supply installations were widened to avoid traffic jams. RR trains near the zone of operations were kept in tunnels or in woods during daylight. The unloading of trains was spread over many small stations, and facilities were made ready so that unloading could be done very quickly. Motor vehicles could drive only to within 10 km of the front. Artillery, ammunition, and bridge-building equipment was moved by horse-drawn vehicles the last 10 km.

At night, strict blackout discipline was maintained.

Many of these security measures had been SOP in the Wehrmacht for some time. However, during the period in question special care was taken to insure strictest enforcement of these rules.

d. Issuance of detailed orders only to senior officers. All preparations for the offensive were carefully supervised from tactical commanders as well as from the troops. Rumors were abroad intimating that the troop concentrations were necessary to hold off an expected Allied attack from north of the Rhine. Orientation was given to small groups of officers, scheduled according to the importance of each unit's mission, and held as shortly as possible before the start of the offensive. This schedule (Terminkalender) was approximately as follows: Briefing for Corps commanders, D minus eight days; for division commanders, D minus six days; for lower echelon unit commanders, D minus one day. Before the briefing, each officer was sworn to secrecy, and told that violation would be punished by death.

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INTERROGATION REPORT No. 74

I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ALEXANDER OFFENSIVE
(Continued)

RUMK himself took part in two briefings and sandtable exercises. The first one took place at Corps headquarters approximately eight days before the start of the offensive. He does not remember which corps it was. Here he was informed about his mission for the first time. The second briefing was held at headquarters of General KREUGER's XLVIII Corps.

The following problems were discussed: movement into assembly and jumping-off areas; artillery positions and ammunition supply; disposition of elements not taking part in the attack; movement of bridge-building equipment; method of attack for units taking part in the jump-off (shock troops, assault troops, etc.); supply of reinforcements; dealing with pockets of resistance in overrun areas; supplies.

No notes could be taken during the briefing, and maps and orders used were collected again at the end of the meeting. Missions and problems which came up during the exercises could be referred to or employed only indirectly in discussions with other officers or in the training of troops. Orders, both written and verbal, maps, etc., could be handled only by a liaison officer especially assigned to this job. During troop movements or on the march into the assembly area, nothing could be disclosed to the men, and only one day before the commitment were they informed about their mission.

c. Censorship. Shortly before and during a move by rail, no letters or other communications could be sent by the troops, and censorship of mail in rail cars was tightened before the start of the offensive. Troops were strictly forbidden to use the civilian postal system, or to telephone, and only liaison officers carried information which was passed by the officers. The civilian postal system was also placed under censorship.

f. Special security indoctrination of individuals. There was no change in the scope and subject matter of the security lectures usually given to troops by their unit commanders; however, these lectures were given more frequently during the period before the start of the offensive. These sessions also concerned RUMK status, for the deliberate spreading of false rumors.

2. Give details concerning the movement of troops immediately prior to the ALEXANDER offensive.

a. Time and place of departure. The Brigade RIVER left the area of RUMK (i.e., Lutzenhausen, BZ RR) on 25 and 26 November 1944; it comprised only units of the Brigade stationed in the vicinity of RUMK BZG.

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S E C R E T

INTERROGATION REPORT No 34

I. Cover and Deception Prior to the ARDENNES Offensive
(Continued)

b. Time and place of arrival. The units mentioned in a. above arrived in the area of DAUN (Lifel) (GSGS 4346/K 51/L 3577), on 29 and 30 November 1944. The following units arrived in the DAUN area in the order listed below, during December, the last one arriving 15 December 1944:

Artillery Abteilung (newly activated)
Heeres Sturmgeschuetz Abteilung
Panzer Abteilung
Panzer Regiments Stab

c. Method of transportation. Transportation was by rail, save for a few small motor convoys.

1. G-2:

FRANK L KING
Major, Infantry
Commanding

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